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The President's tax troubles will be far from over, no matter what the Congressional committee recommends, if two California politicians have their way. John Roberts reports from Sacramento.

Roberts: Assembly Ken Cory [Dem-Garden Grove] of Orange County, and Board of Equalization member William Bennett of Marin County, today called upon the Legislature's leadership to convene a joint committee to investigate why the State Franchise Tax Board has taken no further action in the tax status of California resident , President Richard Nixon.

Assemblyman Cory says the reason he feels the joint committee is necessary is that State Comptroller Houston Flournoy, who serves as chairman of the Franchise Tax Board, said for the third time last week that the Tax Board is going to wait until the completion of a congressional committee into Nixon's taxes. Cory says he does not like the idea of a legislative committee looking into an individual tax return, but when the appropriate agency takes no action he feels that there is no course of action left. He did say that the committee, if convened, would have no effect in law on the Franchise Tax Board, except to bring the matter to light. The Board of Equalization member, Bennett, put it another way.

Bennett: The fact of the matter is, there's no moratorium in the personal income tax law in the State of California deferring any tax liability which may be incumbent upon Richard Nixon; there's nothing which should make him the beneficiary of kind and unusual treatment simply because of who he is and where he is. And in most cases the ordinary taxpayer would have been billed by now and the capital gains tax would have been paid by now.

Roberts: Bennett says that he was accused of grandstanding when he brought up the issue in September of last year, but that the point is that nothing has been done to resolve it. He also raised the specter of Nixon's owing a capital gains tax for sale of property in San Clemente which he says hasn't been resolved either. Bennett says that Flournoy is refusing to call the meeting of the Franchise Tax Board to consider the matters. Bennett served on the board while he was chairman of the Board of Equalization, and now Board of Equalization chairman George Reilly also wants the tax board to meet, but chairman Flournoy still refuses. And now, says Bennett, the chickens are coming home to roost. He says he's received hundreds of petitions, claims and letters from others who feel they are in the same tax status as President Nixon, and in some cases with less claim to California than Nixon. But these people still have to pay taxes to California, Bennett says. He goes on further to say, why should Senators Cranston and Tunney, members of Congress, merchant seamen, members of the military and others, who claim California as a home but are here less than Nixon, have to pay taxes, but the President does not. If this stands, Bennett maintains, this will become the precedent ruling and will govern other tax rulings that come before the Franchise Tax

Board and the Board of Equalization to resolve.

Finally, Assemblyman Cory sums it up this way:

Cory: How can you wait, and why would you wait, for a federal Congressional committee to make some finding of fact, relating to Federal law, to ascertain what you're going to do on state law? I mean, they're apples and oranges.

Roberts: Cory says that if the state government is going to get Californians to willingly pay their taxes, that all Californians, including Richard Nixon, have to play the game by the rules. Cory maintains that Nixon is no different from anyone else and should not, and must not, be given favored treatment. Otherwise, Cory warns, the loss of respect for those in public office will continue to grow, serving to undermine the functions of government.

But Comptroller Flournoy said this afternoon that this is wasteful campaign garbage, to call for a special legislative committee, because the Congressional committee and the Franchise Tax Board have investigations under way, and that the Tax Board investigation has been under way for months, and that the Congressional committee findings are critical to the examination and those findings are expected to be announced on Wednesday [3 Apr]. Flournoy, who is seeking the Republican nomination for Governor, accused both Cory and Bennett of trying to get a few days of publicity by taking political cheap shots, which Flournoy says is an insult to the integrity of the dedicated tax staff of the State of California. Cory is seeking the Democratic nomination for Comptroller, while Bennett is unopposed in the Democratic primary for re-election to the Board of Equalization.

John Roberts, Pacifica Radio, in the State Capitol.